

NEWS RELEASE

Pacific Northwest Region - Colville National Forest
765 S. Main Street, Colville, WA 99114, www.fs.usda.gov/colville

Contact: Franklin Pemberton, 509.684.7177

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Culverts To Be Replaced For Fish Passage

Colville, WA...The Colville National Forest will replace five culverts starting next summer in the East and West Branch LeClerc Creek watersheds, a tributary to the Pend Oreille River, to allow for fish passage.

The project will take place on Forest Service Roads 1934000 (East Branch LeClerc Creek Road) and 1935000 (Middle Branch LeClerc Creek Road). Existing round culverts at crossings on three unnamed tributaries to West Branch LeClerc Creek and two unnamed tributaries to East Branch LeClerc Creek will be replaced with structures that provide upstream and downstream fish passage. During construction, the streams would be piped around each replacement site to reduce sediment movement. Work is scheduled to begin in August of 2014 and is scheduled to be completed by October 2015. There will be temporary delays and temporary road closures associated with this work on both roads.

Once the replacement structures for the existing culverts are in place, fish will regain access to suitable spawning and rearing habitat. Westslope cutthroat trout, a species listed as strategic for the National Forests of Washington and Oregon, live in the West and East Branch LeClerc Creek watersheds. The drainages are also considered a core habitat area and contains critical habitat for the recovery of the bull trout. Bull trout are federally listed as a threatened species.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Rob Lawler, Newport Ranger District Hydrologist at 509-447-7300.

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Background

In the past, when forest roads were built across the west culverts installed in the roadbeds at stream crossings were not designed to provide for upstream fish passage. As a result, many culverts are acting as barriers to fish movement. A number of culverts were installed high above the stream level, making it impossible for fish to move upstream. Other culverts are narrower than the stream above and create a strong current inside the culvert that fish are unable to swim through it. Fish populations became isolated from each other on either side of these barriers and were no longer able to interbreed. Fish in the lower portion of a blocked creek were no longer able to reach suitable spawning and rearing habitat in the creek's headwaters. Fish populations in the headwaters were often small and isolated and more vulnerable to inbreeding or to being wiped out by an environmental event.

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The mission of the US Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. Recreational activities on our lands contribute \$14.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world.



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